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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004230

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/ERA, EUR/UMB, AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BO](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY'S EU PRESIDENCY - THE WAY AHEAD ON BELARUS

REF: STATE 259322

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINISTER COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN. REASON: 1.5 (B)(D)

[11](#). (C) ON SEPTEMBER 16, MFA NIS DESK OFFICER LORENZO ORTONA CONFIRMED TO POLOFF THAT THE DRAFT US-EU STATEMENT ON BELARUS WE PROVIDED TO THE PRESIDENCY WAS DISCUSSED AT THE SEPTEMBER 12 PSC IN BRUSSELS. ORTONA SAID THAT WHILE ITALY AND THE OTHER MEMBER STATES AGREED WITH THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DRAFT, THEY DID NOT CONCUR ON US PROPOSED TIMING FOR RELEASING THE STATEMENT.

[12](#). (C) ORTONA SAID THAT CONSENSUS AT THE PSC FORMED AROUND A PLAN TO WAIT, IN ORDER TO GIVE A RECENT EU DEMARCHE DELIVERED IN MINSK (EXPRESSING CONCERN OVER THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE STEP-BY-STEP/BENCHMARK INITIATIVES) A CHANCE TO SINK IN WITH THE LUKASHENKO REGIME. THE EU ALSO WANTS TO WAIT UNTIL THERE ARE CLEARER SIGNALS WHETHER LUKASHENKO WILL CALL A REFERENDUM ON HIS OWN POLITICAL FUTURE. WHEN THE EU IS SATISFIED THE TIMING IS RIGHT, THE REF A TEXT CAN BE USED ALMOST AS DRAFTED, PREDICTED ORTONA.
SEMBLER

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